



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

December 11, 2015

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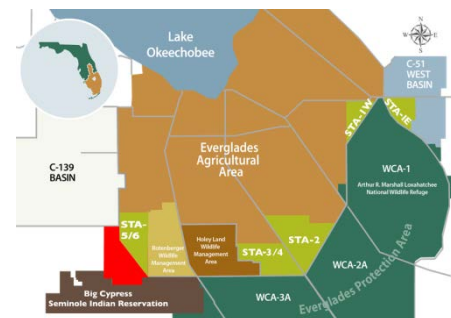
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SFWMD Starts Work to Return Citrus Grove Back to Historic Everglades *The project will restore wildlife habitat and provide an array of ecosystem benefits*

West Palm Beach, FL – Work to restore a former citrus grove back to Everglades habitat is set to begin with a construction contract approved this week by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

Known as the Sam Jones/ Abiaki Prairie C-139 Annex Restoration Project, the approximately 15,000-acre site in Hendry County will be restored to an expansive wet prairie system with scattered cypress domes, tree island hammocks and sloughs. The restoration effort is designed to attract wildlife back to the site, including hares, turkeys, hawks, eagles, bobcats, black bears and panthers and benefit the groundwater, surface water and water supply of the area.



The project is shaded in red. (Click on the map for a larger version.)

“Returning this land back to its former nature will bring vast benefits for wildlife and overall Everglades ecology,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O’Keefe. “As the site is adjacent to our treatment wetlands, restoring it will help connect natural areas across an expansive region.”

JMS Construction Services, the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, was awarded the approximately \$1.5 million contract. This initial phase of construction entails site preparation, including:

- Removal and replacement of existing infrastructure such as metal pipes
- Removal of 247 8-inch diameter drainage culverts
- Abandonment of 15 irrigation wells
- Demolition and removal of associated concrete pads and piping

Background

The Sam Jones/ Abiaki Prairie property is situated between the Seminole Tribe of Florida Big Cypress Reservation and Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6 in southeastern Hendry County.

At the District's invitation, the Seminole Tribe chose to name the property the Sam Jones/ Abiaki Prairie after their great spiritual leader and hero (known by both names), who was thought to have lived on the property.

Several tribal maps indicate his 19th century village was at the crossroads of numerous historical trails located on this site. The District is coordinating with leaders of the Seminole Tribe of Florida on the restoration effort of this environmentally sensitive land.

More Information:

- [Quick Facts on the C-139 Restoration](#)

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving flood control, water quality, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.